



Upper School Newsletter

News from the Asst. Headmaster

With April Break just a few days away, I am once again reminded of how fast this year is truly progressing. So much has happened with so much more to come. We have successfully completed the first round of MCAS testing and are readying ourselves for the next batch to come in May.

While most Upper School newsletters focus on several items, this particular issue is primarily focused on cell-phone texting. A survey of 7th and 8th graders was conducted in homeroom on the morning of April 8th. It was done anonymously and the responses are listed by percentages on the back of this page.

When something comes before us that has potentially harmful effects to our students, your children, we feel it is our responsibility to inform you of these issues. This particular issue, texting, impacts the majority of the Upper School in some way, shape, or form, whether it be as a participant, or the feeling of being potentially ostracized because one

is not. This is becoming larger than life quicker than we can keep up. If this were a disease, it would be classified as an epidemic, perhaps even a pandemic. The overall impact on your children later in life is unknown, thus making the issue that much more concerning.

The intent is not to be overdramatic but rather to provide knowledge to you of which you may not already be aware. Hopefully the information contained on the back page of this newsletter will open some eyes and start some conversations.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or e-mail me.

Sincerely,

Bill Grubb

Asst. Headmaster, Upper School

Chenery Middle
School

April 2009

Special points of interest:

- Important Dates
- Text Message Survey
- Texting Gone MAD! And BAD!!!

Important Dates

- April 16th: PTO meeting , 9 a.m. CMS Community Room.
- April 16th: Chamber Music Concert: 7:00 p.m. CMS Auditorium.
- April 18th-26th: April Break
- May 6th: Coffee with the Headmaster, 9:00 a.m., Community Room.
- May 7,8,9: Upper School Musical, 7:00 p.m. CMS Auditorium.
- Week of May 11th-MCAS. (Math only for Grade 7, Math and Science for Grade 8)
- May 15th: 7th grade only dance, 7:00-9:30 p.m. CMS Cafeteria.



Mark these dates on your calendar.

Text Messaging Survey Results

1. Do you own a cell phone?

Yes 87% No 13%

(If "No" thank you for completing this survey.)

2. Do you have text messaging service?

Yes 88% No 12%

(If "No" thank you for completing this survey.)

3. How many hours a day do you text?

0-1 42% 1-2 20% 2-3 13% 3-4 5%

More than 4 20%

4. How many texts a month do you send?

0-25 29% 25-50 13% 50-100 15%

100-500 15% 500 or more 28%

5. How late do you stay up at night texting?

9:00 30% 10:00 28% 11:00 14%

Midnight or later 4% Do not stay up 24%

6. Do you text message while in school?

Yes 31% No 69%

7. Do you ever receive text messages from a parent while in school?

Yes 42% No 58%

* Question 1 percentage based on 453 participants.

**Question 2 based on 394 participants.

***Questions 3-7 based on 345 participants.



Texting Gone MAD! (And BAD!!!)

A month or so ago, I was walking down the hallway and noticed a large book bag on the ground. As I picked it up attempting to establish whom the owner may be, I noticed a cell phone inside the bag. As I reached for it, it began vibrating in my hand. Little did I know where my act of goodwill would lead. As I researched the origin of the text message, I then confiscated the phone of the alleged "texter". As his/her phone sat in my drawer, low and behold, it went off. The chase for the next "texter" was on. This went on all day. While I knew children were texting during the school day and at night, I didn't grasp the magnitude nor the ability to send a text message so quickly and so often. Some students are even able to text without ever removing the phone from their pockets. It is quite a talent. What made the situation that day, and many others since, so frustrating, is that several of the texts were responses to texts from parents. There was one case where I called a parent to let her know that her child was texting in school. She was very apologetic and disappointed in her child's decision. As the phone sat in my drawer, a message came through...from the child's dad. While I certainly understand the importance of communicating with one's child, the phones are supposed to be off and unseen during the school day. The above survey clearly indicates that this is not the case and some parents are doing little to assist in this matter. (146 students in the Upper School, 1 out of every 4 students, receive a text message from a parent during the school day).

I often joke that I want to go back to the institution of higher learning which gave me my masters degree and ask for my money back, as they truly have not prepared me to be effective in my position. What I learned in my graduate programs were more education and supervision related. What they failed to prepare me for was the advancement of technology and its impact on our students.

In terms of student impact, most noticeable with our students who text most frequently, is a decline in their academic performance. And while students may still be earning good grades, I am concerned that they are not reaching their fullest potential. Many students stay up quite late texting. How can they not be tired when they come to school? There is countless research that points to the benefit of at least eight hours of sleep, with many adolescents requiring more.

What can we as parents do to help with this growing problem? First of all, establish guidelines on when and how often the phone can be used. Monitor the cell phone bill to see when the texting is taking place and with what frequency. Read the texts from time to time. I know there is a fine line between respecting a child's privacy and looking out for a child's best interest. Overall, there is becoming a widening gap in favor of giving students responsibilities that they clearly are not developmentally ready to handle.